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Irving Kristol vs. the American Dream

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

We have been favored once again with a pronouncement from on high, from the usual voice in the usual place: Irving Kristol in the *Wall Street Journal*. In a confused, fallacy-ridden, and slightly hysterical essay on the "American Dream," Kristol lays down the new Official Line on the growing anger and political pessimism of the American people.

According to Kristol, the public's crabby outlook toward American politics, and modern life in general, is simple childishness. The cure is therefore not political and cultural counterrevolution, but maturation, which he sums up in the phrase: "Why don't you grow up?"

"I am tired," says Kristol, "of hearing our politicians, liberal and conservative, pontificate on 'the American Dream,' how we are falling short of it, frustrating it, neglecting it, and in general allowing ourselves to be cheated of it. Is that the way adults are supposed to talk?"

Well, if the complainers caused their own plight, I can see the point. But if something was yours and has been stolen from you, it is not childish to demand it back, nor to seek to punish the thieves. It is simple justice.

And it is the quest for justice that is motivating the mass dissatisfaction with modern American political life. The complaints are not silly and unreasonable, but sophisticated and concrete. Moreover, these crabby Americans—who now register more discontent with government than at any time in modern history—have a pretty good idea of what to do about it. That's precisely what worries Kristol—and what his plan is designed to stymie.

Just why are Americans fretting about the state of the world? Let me count the ways. There is no Cold War, and no enemy anywhere in the world that threatens our borders, yet the warfare state moves full speed ahead. Meanwhile, we are supposed to care intensely about the latest news from Bosnia, as criminals roam our streets.

Is there no end to the military-industrial state? In a blatant sop to Lockheed, the Republicans want to build the B-2 "Stealth" bomber, which, it turns out, *can* be detected on radar, and whose own radar still can't tell a cloud from a mountain. Worse, it's an offensive weapon, designed to annihilate cities.

As for the malignant welfare state, it too is growing. The unproductive are still looting the productive, as they have since the New Deal. And since the Great Society, the unproductive are also

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P.C. Watch

Yolanda Juanita Crocker

"For 75 years, the most famous face in American grocery stores has been a paragon of white Middle America: a cheery housewife with blue eyes, creamy skin, and June Cleaver features," says the *Wall Street Journal*.

The original Betty Crocker was a middle-aged, motherly figure who was gradually transformed into a younger woman "as comfortable in the board room as the dining room," according to General Mills. The picture of Betty also gradually disappeared from all products except cookbooks. But that is all about to change, as the company issues a new, multicultural image, a P.C. B.C., so to speak.

Taking 75 faces from black, Hispanic, Asian, white, and other women, the company

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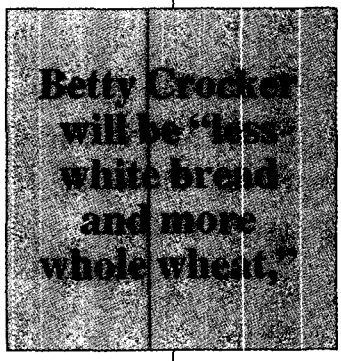
will combine them through computer graphics into a new, racially mixed Betty. "We're hoping for ethnic diversity, which is what's happening with homemakers," says the company, somewhat mysteriously. The new Betty will have darker skin, a wider nose, and slanted eyes, while not belonging to any recognizable group. But she will be definitely "less white bread and more whole wheat," says an observer. (*WSJ*, 9/11/95)

Hairburgers

Three young black women have "won the right to wear braids to work at Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers after a manager briefly banned the hairstyle" as unsanitary. The women, said the *New York Times* (9/3/95), "have shoulder-length hair braided into more than 100 stiff strands in a style popular among black youth. The three called the ban racist."



The manager "said we were prone to bugs and lice because we don't wash our hair," said Nikitia Grant. "It was so messed up it was sad."

Andrea J. Nicolls, a curator of African art at the Smithsonian, said the white manager demonstrated "ignorance of African culture." She said the style was "meant to keep the hair clean and out of the way in a hot, dusty climate."

The owner of the franchise may fire the manager, who had allowed a white girl to have long hair "because I know she washes it." The braided hairdos, according to the *Times*, "take about nine hours and cost about $85," including a "monthly scalp cleaning."

Rethinking Ian Smith, Part II

Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe, continues to be in the news for criticizing gay rights. When a group of 70 U.S. Congressmen, led by Barney Frank (D-MA), sent a protest letter to him, Mugabe's response was, "Let the Americans keep their sodomy, bestiality, stupid, and foolish ways to themselves and out of Zimbabwe. "We don't want those practices here" (*San Jose Mercury News*, 8/27/95).

The Slavery Game

Parents of a sixth-grade black student in Phoenix, Arizona, are suing the local school district for using a "computer game in which players take on the role of enslaved Southern blacks trying to escape," says the *New York Times* (8/28/95). In the game, "Freedom!," players "start off as illiterate and are referred to as 'boy,' as they try to gain the educational skills necessary to head to the North," said the federal lawsuit.

One character, Grandfather Cato, says, "I sees a runnin' look in yo' eyes, chile. How c'n I help?" The parents say their child's civil rights were violated; his feelings were hurt when some white students made fun of the characters in the game.

The Good Old Days

Gays who used to dance at an old theater in New York City are trying to save the building from demolition. Once it was a discotheque called the Saint, named after a bathhouse, where thousands of "gay men could dance together under countless stars splashed across a sweeping planetarium dome. Extravagant, unfettered, flagrant, and foredoomed, the Saint was the zenith of gay life in New York City in the early 1980s."

"It is not the drugs" that the "surviving alumni" talk about, "although drugs were heavily used there. Nor is it the sex, although the balcony was a notorious venue. Rather, it is the memory that before their lives were ravaged by AIDS, they once found a refuge from a hostile world in a lavish fantasy realm of seamless music and of shirtless men moving in almost tribal unison."

"Opelika Mom Craves Laundry Starch"

That was the headline on one of a series of articles on "pica, the eating of nontraditional, nonfood items" in the *Opelika-Auburn News*.

"An Opelika mom consumes a box of laundry starch a day," as do some of her friends. "It doesn't have a taste," says Myrna Bellamy. "I just get an urge to eat it. I eat it all during the day." "Most people I know eat white dirt, but I tried it and I don't like it—it's too gritty."

Although Mrs. Bellamy is black, "pica is not limited to any age, sex, or racial group," says reporter William White, who defines pica as "a behavior by humans who ingest non-food substances," including dirt, clay, laundry starch, hair, baking soda, mothballs, and blocks of toilet-bowl freshener. Some pregnant women believe that eating white clay or laundry starch "makes the baby's skin lighter and helps the baby slip out during delivery."

Michigan Libertarian

"Peter A. Poprafsky feels he

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has the right to decide who is allowed on his property and in his home," says Michigan's *Oakland Press* (5/4/95). "I think anyone has the right to deal with the kind of people he chooses," he said. "I don't feel guilty for what I did." What he did was add the phrase "No Blacks Allowed" to a for-sale sign on his front lawn, "stirring up racial passions." Now he has been fined $4,500 by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Unbelievably, said an assistant attorney general, Poprafsky "considers it no big deal, that he can do what he wants" with his property. "I just made a point," said Poprafsky, "no blacks allowed. I think as a homeowner I have that right." ■

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guaranteed jobs, promotions, houses, businesses, and loans.

Taxes—including the Social Security flat income tax—are stealing up to 40% of people's wages and income. Meanwhile, young people can barely start families because the wife can't afford to stop working long to have a child, much less several. And couples with children have to farm them out to daycare workers and government teachers. And still parents fall behind. What future is there for their children, except more of the same or worse?

Thanks to the central state and its inflation, taxes, affirmative action, and social insurance schemes, hard work is no longer a guarantee of success.

The standard of living has been falling in fits and starts for about 24 years now. Add to that the virulence of crime, the silence or lies about the implications of crime's demographics, the distance people commute to live away from crime, the perpetual increase of prices for just about everything, and the horrible state of popular culture (all polls show increased disgust). Let's also include declining quality, civility, manners, faith, and just about every other virtue you can think of.

It's no wonder that people are crabby. But fortunately they are doing more than just complaining. Americans are more politically active now than in decades, but they are active in a way that Kristol doesn't like.

In the old days, being civic minded meant that you knew the branches of government, voted every couple of years, and in general praised the glories of the American system. People are still civic minded, but now it's in the more important sense that they can detect lies and betrayals.

The standard of living has been falling for about 24 years now.

Someday, we may look back at the election of November 1994 as the last great burst of hope of the American people in the political process. But the Republicans show every sign of betraying that hope, deepening the cynicism and anger of millions.

Critics like David Frum respond that the angry masses may hate government, but they are inconsistent. They still partake in programs like Medicare and Social Security, the two fastest growing parts of the central state. Yet even this fact deserves a reinterpretation. When the criminal steals your property and ruins your life, are you just supposed to feel a general sense of regret, but never try to arrange restitution?

More and more people have come to think of Medicare and Social Security as a form of restitution. Participation in social insurance schemes doesn't necessarily mean approval; all it proves is that some of the system's victims are demanding some of their money back.

I may not approve of this (their money was long ago spent or divided among thieves, and they're taking someone else's earnings), but people's desire for some compensation for their slavery to the tax police is no proof that they love the master.

Let's be clear. What is this "American Dream" that people see slipping away? Contrary to the liberal view, it is not the probability that every generation will be more materially prosperous than the last. That is a conflation of the Dream with one of its many effects.

Neither is the Dream the desire to rule the world by military force, or to be the World's Only Superpower, as some neoconservatives have suggested.

No, the American Dream was, is, and will always be the promise of freedom. In the American political context, that means we can enjoy unimpeded our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that individuals, families, and communities will not be harassed, taxed, or controlled by the central state.

The absence of arbitrary coercion from distant rulers allows people to pursue happiness in their own families, businesses, communities, and churches, and to determine their fate according to their own choices. People can then be held accountable for their actions and the consequences of their actions. Liberty: it's a simple idea that lies at the heart of the Declaration and the Constitution.

This thesis is everywhere you look in America, past and present: literature, poetry, film, and, yes,

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political speeches. On the other hand, militarism and materialism have no necessary connection to this dream of freedom at all, despite the attempt of the pundit class to tell us otherwise.

Even when the American Dream has been betrayed—and the new U.S. government began betraying it very early—the action has usually been cast in terms of freedom. Why did the North prevent the South from seceding? So the slaves could be freed. Why do we have quotas? So official victims can be free to get the jobs they want. Why do we need welfare? So the underclass can be free of poverty. Why do we need an empire? So foreigners can be free.

These are obvious, and mostly unsuccessful, attempts to hijack for statism the idea of liberty. The job of all conservative-libertarians, and all right-wing intellectuals and grassroots activists, should be to reclaim the mantle of liberty for voluntary association and contract, self-government, tradition, private property, and community rights.

Kristol wants us to believe that greater levels of oppression are as inevitable as birthdays.

Yet the idea of freedom as the heart of the American Dream is missing from Kristol's essay. "The U.S. is just chock full of people—most of us, in fact—who have failed to realize our childish or youthful dreams," he writes. "Fortunately, only a tiny minority of perpetual malcontents dwell endlessly on this normal human experience. Why should it be different for us collectively?"

There's a huge leap here. He deliberately confuses the American Dream with people's personal goals. So when a kid wants to be a professional athlete, or a young man wants to be rich, and doesn't make it, we're supposed to believe that the Dream has been dashed?

The reason we let go of our childish dreams is that we realize they are unrealistic or not actually what we want at all. If that's all the American Dream were, Kristol would be right.

It is his phrase "perpetual malcontents" that tells us how Kristol regards those who are dissatisfied with the present political order. By using this phrase within a discussion about personal failings, he implies that people upset with the political order are out to shift the blame for their personal failings onto others.

Are people *en masse* furious at the state of the country? Why, that's merely a collectivization of personal failings, no more legitimate than individual whining. With this trick, Kristol thinks he explains away and then dismisses popular opinion that doesn't conform to his idea of how the world ought to be run.

So it goes throughout the essay, while he fails to grant that there might be a very good reason people are upset at their rulers.

Keeping the metaphor running, Kristol says "we are today a middle-aged nation, with a majority of middle-aged and elderly citizens, still in pursuit of youthful fantasies." He cites the case of women trying to look like their daughters. This is even "far more problematic on the political level," because it leads to the belief "that radical corrective action is absolutely needed."

Hold on a minute. To say: I'd like to repeal the New Deal is not the same as saying I'd like to be 21 again. Aging is nature's course. We come from dust and to dust we shall return. We'd be silly (and even immoral) to object to this law of life.

But politics is a different matter. It takes no predetermined path. The present state of the country, and the level of tyranny we accept, is a consequence of human choice. The government—its agents and its supporters—have made the conscious decision to put their hands around our necks and to tighten that grip year by year, as they pick our pockets and tell us it's for our own good. We are right to be furious, to pry the hands off, and to grab any weapon at hand to redress our grievances.

If our present circumstances were a consequence of nature—if nobody were actually causing us to grow poorer—then neither would it be right to hold anyone accountable for our plight. This is exactly the conclusion that Kristol wants us to draw from his fallacious analogy between the loss of youth and the loss of freedom.

Implicitly, Kristol is also asking us to believe that greater and greater levels of oppression are as inevitable as birthdays. The sign of our maturity would be to accept our "age," meaning, oddly, a government that spends $1.7 trillion per year, and taxes and regulates away more than two-thirds of the actual and potential national income, so that the mandarins and the underclass can live off the people.

To try to slay Leviathan—to think that "radical corrective action" might be needed—is the moral equivalent of facelifts, liposuction, inappropriate clothes, and freezing your head to be revived later. It is an attempt to defy historical inevitability.

Sensing that the analogy may not be perfect, Kristol changes tactics just as he begins to describe

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our plight more concretely. We are no longer "confident that our children will be better off than we are." Indeed. This is what Joseph Schumpeter identified as the cause of revolutions from the beginning of time.

However, instead of concluding that something has gone wrong, Kristol assures us that this is "a perfectly natural phenomenon, not any kind of crisis." But how can we know? Is it really a law of nature that our children will be poorer than we are? What is Kristol's proof? And why has this law only recently come into effect? At this point, Kristol resorts to tomfoolery. "The reason it is perfectly natural," says he, "is that it is a matter of arithmetic, and the laws of arithmetic bow before no dream."

What follows is a tale of his immigrant parents, who accepted the "American Dream," which Kristol now additionally links to immigration. They believed in it, he actually achieved it, and his sons may "do slightly better." "But what about my five grandchildren? To what stratospheric heights will they rise? The answer almost certainly is, to no stratospheric heights."

That's the closest we get to his mathematical theorem about the inevitability of growing levels of middle-class poverty.

There's another problem with Kristol's "age" metaphor: it is solipsistic. It suggests that the country's "youth" coincided with *his* parent's immigration in the 1890s; the country's "middle age" coincides with the height of *his* career; and, presumably, its "old age" will coincide with the anointing of *his* son as the new boss of bosses.

History is not the neocons' strong suit, but should we really have to remind Kristol that our country's history dates to the Virginia and Massachusetts settlements, and not to Ellis Island?

In all this talk about "maturing," Kristol is calling on the masses to settle down and prepare for the nursing home. What do we have to worry about?

His generation of New Class intellectuals is in charge of the moneyed foundations, the political parties, and the national media, and they've worked hard to confine public debate within certain narrow boundaries. Now it's time for us to let them rule, even if it means that our children will suffer.

The fate that Kristol wants us to accept has a name: socialism.

That's not American, you say? Well, it's also time we jettison the myth of our exceptionalism from the Marxoid laws of historical inevitability. Kristol proclaims that "we are simply replicating the experience of such old nations as England and France." "Many of my British friends," he adds, "are resigned to seeing their children do less well. Such resignation is our fate."

That may be the view of those who have tended to view politics as the business of their betters. But when their king was taxing us too much, we told him to mind his own business. The Brits continued to sink into the mire, but Americans have a strong sense of cause and effect: as in, if you trespass, I'll shoot. Here, politics is everyone's business, especially when the government gets out line.

The fate that Kristol wants us to accept has a name: socialism. It was that system and the villains behind it—not an anonymous force of nature—that caused the living standards of the British middle class to decline.

Their socialism had the usual mix of welfarism, graft, redistributionism, and imperialism. No doubt we are going the same way. But the lesson to draw from the British experience is not that it is inevitable, but that we should struggle against it with all our might. The British disease can be avoided and reversed.

But that is not the lesson Kristol wants us to draw from British history. He seems to be advancing a version of the Club of Rome theory, that there are mysterious built-in forces that cause industrialized economies to stagnate and die. We can only get so rich, produce so much, and suddenly, it all just comes to an end.

Now, Kristol doesn't make this argument openly. That would expose him to the charge that he had come full circle within his own neoconservative doctrine. Battling the "Limits to Growth" theory of 1970s-style liberalism was the first issue that neocons used, besides anti-Stalinism, in their takeover of the Right. If they were now seen as endorsing those limits—and Kristol tacitly is—it would expose the duplicity that lies at the heart of all their political maneuverings.

But consistency has never been a virtue to a group that has shifted from Leninism, to Trotskyism, to social democracy, to plain liberal statism, to anti-communism, to proto-capitalism, to cultural conservatism. Is the next stage neo-Luddite resignationism? Since the point is not truth or the good society, but the achievement and maintenance of political power, any philosophical cover will do.

The shift is already detectable within other neoconservative writings and speeches. Exhibit A is a piece by Alan Reynolds, a fanatically pro-Nafta economist for the

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Hudson Institute. In his contribution to the campaign book for Lamar Alexander, Reynolds takes on the "myth" that the middle class is getting poorer, marshaling evidence such as the square footage of houses, the proliferation of computers, the existence of cordless phones, etc.

What Reynolds misses, of course, is that thanks to the government, we're consuming capital, and living it up on our savings. Nor do his specifics have anything to do with the way the middle class assesses its future. Technological changes, even amazing ones, are quickly assimilated. But the fact that our kids won't be able to go to a decent college, or that the value of their degree will be radically diminished because of egalitarianism, doesn't go down too easily.

People know that our fortunes are sinking, and no Nafta hack is going to talk them out of it.

Nobody says, "my kids have no future, but at least I've got a cordless phone." People know that our fortunes are sinking, and no Nafta hack is going to talk them out of it.

Another person who joined the "stop-complaining" club several years ago is Bill Bennett. He chalks up all talk of political change to childishness, or, in the case of Pat Buchanan, to "flirting with fascism." At nearly every one of Bennett's speeches, he tells the following anecdote:

During the 1992 election, Bush and Clinton were confronted by a questioner who demanded to know what each of the candidates would do for him. As Bennett tells the story, Clinton responded with a list of benefits and programs, and Bush talked about getting the economy going again. Then Bennett puts on his virtue cap, gets morally indignant, and says that we need a candidate who would have told the questioner to get a life, and to stop expecting politicians to do things for him.

It sounds wonderful at first, and almost everyone applauds. Yet telling the questioner to get a life is another way of saying, you don't have the right to expect anything of politics. In fact, Americans have the right to expect *everything* of politics.

We are told that government will defend us against invasion, armed or alien, and keep public order. But when the central state becomes the preeminent threat to prosperity, peace, property, and public safety, we have the right to expect politicians to do something about it. The only good reason to vote for anyone is the hope that he will tear down our oppressors.

A good candidate for president would tell that man, for example, that here's what he would do for him: cut his taxes to virtually nothing, stop harassing him with government agents, restore the rights of his state and community, free his business from civil-rights socialism, and keep his children out of foreign wars.

This is the answer we are demanding from our politicians, thus the neoconservative panic. For unlike Kristol's beloved Brits, Americans will not sit back and take it. We will make sure that the promise of liberty is both offered and fulfilled in our time, and we will take whatever "radical corrective action" is necessary. ■

A Lot of Dam Money

by JoAnn Rothbard

Hoover Dam, spanning the Colorado river between Nevada and Arizona, about 20 miles southwest of Las Vegas, is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the southwest.

The giant New Deal public works project was built in four and a half years, between 1931 and 1935, at a cost of $54.7 million. An impressive sight, it was the highest dam in the world when it was built, and is still the highest in the western hemisphere. It forms a lake that takes up parts of three states. Visitors can take a tour of the dam and see the hydroelectric plant connected to it.

There are several parking lots for visitors' cars, on each side of the dam, and a bus to transport people from the farther lots.

In 1983, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Interior Department agency that built and runs the dam, decided it needed a new visitors center and garage to accommodate the heavy load of tourists. A plan was drawn up with an estimated cost of $32 million. Construction began in 1984.

In the summer of 1995, the new visitors center and five story garage were finally opened, but the cost was an astounding $123 million, almost four times the original estimate. What happened?

First let me describe the visitors center. Until now, people waiting for a tour had to line up on the sidewalk, in the sun. The temperature in the summer at the dam often gets to 120 degrees. And that is in the shade, a scarcity there. Now visitors will go into an air conditioned lobby, and then take a 70 second elevator ride down to

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one of three revolving theaters to see a movie on the construction of the dam. Then they will pass through an exhibit hall to an overlook on the river below.

One reason for the cost overrun was unavoidable. While the new center was being built, the Americans With Disabilities Act passed Congress, necessitating ramps and other paraphernalia.

However, most of the underestimated cost seems to have been fraud—in other words, things that could and should have been foreseen weren't. The chief construction engineer said, "When you're talking about the visitors center cost, the 1983 estimates didn't cover a lot of details, location, difficulty, and logistics of the site." What is the point of an estimate that doesn't cover the difficulties?

For instance, the cost of the elevator was estimated as if it were to be installed in a building, whereas in reality it incurred months of blasting with dynamite within the canyon wall.

Also, because of highpower electric lines above the canyon, cranes could not be used to install pre-cast concrete. Rather, concrete had to be poured on the site. Both of these difficulties were obvious, but perhaps if a correct estimate had been produced, permission would not have been given.

Can you imagine what would have happened to a private company with these sort of accounting practices?

How will this all be paid for? Power users in southern Nevada, Arizona, and California will repay it over 50 years. In that time, the debt with interest will have grown to $435 million.

The fee for the tour is $5 including parking. A spokesman for the Bureau of Reclamation says it "hopes to generate $3 million per year in excess of costs...to help the power customers repay the construction cost." Wanna bet? ◙

The Rotten Center

by Paul Gottfried

In presenting the "yeast of human craziness" in a commentary (August 30) on the internet, *New York Times* columnist Barbara O'Brien tries to scare her politically correct readers. According to O'Brien, there are people on the internet crazy enough to think that "the South seceded either to protect states' rights or to protest our tariff rates." Throughout her comments, which never manage to be funny, we are given the impression that those who believe in dual federalism as basic to the U.S. Constitution deserve to be in a lunatic asylum.

Neocons have recycled Cold War liberalism as conservatism.

In *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1995) Arthur Schlesinger treats another sign of American mental illness, the "isolationist return to the womb desired by the American people." Schlesinger recalls nostalgically the achievements of Woodrow Wilson and FDR in "preparing" our nation to become involved in two World Wars. Such exercises of executive power in the face of massive opposition are, for Schlesinger, expressions of popular government properly understood. Such government is not about citizens determining their political life but about the creation and application of policies which are considered good for the people.

This essay by Schlesinger is appropriate, for his book *The Vital Center*, published in September 1948, set the moral and ideological tone of postwar liberalism. In *The Vital Center* another liberal-neoconservative assumption about the world jumps out at the reader, that the true political center is a self-perfecting social democracy which opposes equally Communist aggression and the reactionary Right.

Schlesinger likens the Communists to the authoritarian Right in his attempt to integrate anti-Communism into an essentially leftist program of world control. And he associates the Right with the usual suspects, anti-New Deal Republicans, Nazis, military dictators, and Southern regionalists.

Although never demonstrated, it is assumed that these bad types merge into a common front; and it is the American people's duty to fight this reactionary front with relentless zeal. The historian John Ehrman is correct when he asserts that Schlesinger's images shape and reflect a Cold War liberal consensus about America's role in the world; and the neoconservatives have helped perpetuate those images, which they have recycled as conservative ones.

Equally important for the creation of this liberal consensus was the therapeutic redefinition of American identity, a process that began in earnest after the Second World War. Both the struggle against fascism and Cold War liberal anti-Communism were thought to mandate the inculcation among American citizen-subjects of democratic attitudes.

Such education was thought necessary to make Americans less prejudiced and more sensitive to historically disadvantaged groups.

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The postwar campaign to fight undemocratic attitudes was important to the U.S. Commission of Higher Education, which issued statements on this subject. It also became linked to mental health in the vast *Studies in Prejudice* series, launched in 1950 and financed by the American Jewish Committee.

These studies, which ramble on for thousands of undigestible pages and owe their existence to liberal social scientists like Max Horkhemer, S.M. Lipset, and Theodor Adorno, stress anti-Semitism as the major threat to "American political institutions." Throughout the *Studies*, the incidence of anti-Semitism in the U.S. is wildly overstated and conveniently correlated to political and social views which the authors disapproved of. Thus any murmuring about the welfare state is alleged to reveal a syndrome of "pseudo-democratic" and authoritarian traits; and the point is made that those who complain about the Washington bureaucrats and FDR are likely to hate other "outsiders," particularly Jews, blacks, and homosexuals.

Any murmuring about the welfare state is alleged to reveal a syndrome of "pseudo democratic" and authoritarian traits.

Dislike for government social planning is made to appear "pathological." Such opposition is related not only to the scourge of anti-Semitism but, in Adorno's contrived analysis, to criminal propensities and the "prehistory of fascism." In fact, anyone whose economic or constitutional views Adorno dislikes is assumed to be both anti-Semitic and incipiently fascistic.

More significant than the propagandistic character of these studies are the origin and history of the misconceptions they enshrine. Despite the Stalinist sympathies of Adorno at the time, the series did correspond to the mood of national mobilization that went from World War Two into the Cold War. Like its publication *Commentary*, the American Jewish Committee hoped to create a public orthodoxy built around the welfare state and fighting anti-Semitism.

The identification of politically unfashionable attitudes with social disease helped to advance these purposes. It also defined pluralism, a favorite buzzword of liberal internationalists, in a way that restricted dissent. The parameters of legitimate disagreement were progressively narrowed, with dissenters denounced as psychotic or anti-Semitic. Most importantly, as the late Murray N. Rothbard discovered to his consternation, anti-Semitism came to have less and less to do with persecuting Jews, as opposed to holding improper political views.

The *Studies in Prejudice* received a second life in the sixties, when the ADL took over the sponsorship of a new series on "radical right" prejudice. The moving force here was Earl Raab who has recently distinguished himself as a spokesman for non-Western immigration. In his monthly *Bulletin*, this director of Brandeis University's Institute for Jewish Advocacy looks forward to a future when half of the American people "will be non-white and non-European." "Only then will we have tipped the point where a Nazi-Aryan party will be able to prevail in this country." Raab equates any opposition to this multicultural policy with "ethnic bigotry," and in the sixties linked efforts to dismantle the welfare state to anti-Semitism, a term emptied even by then of any serious historical meaning.

Thus we see forty years ago the beginnings of a contemporary practice: those who stand outside the liberal-neocon dialogue were dismissed as sick, and, as Joshua Muravchik said about me after I had pointed out that the Sakharovs had blood on their social democratic escutcheons, those who cross the arbitrarily drawn line of political health have "no standing whatever in discussion."

Needless to say, this form of debate suits "liberal democratic" state managers and the corporate elite tied to them from the hip. In a country where by now 30% of those who work draw at least half their salaries from public funds, it may seem counterproductive to bite the hand that feeds. Better to be nice and go along with the system, especially when sharp dissent or uncooperative attitudes about public administration and public policy can damage one's reputation for sanity. (By now of course sanity and sensitivity are the same.)

Despite the political and journalistic forces upholding the system, the managerial-therapeutic state, as I argue in a book now in progress, is slowly unraveling. Its patronage machine and ideological priesthood can no longer instill respect, and the world that administrative slaveholders built is now producing contempt mixed with fear. At the recent *United We Stand* conference held in Dallas, it was remarkable to see all the Republican presidential contenders competing in their expressions of revulsion for the federal administration.

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Most of the speakers emphasized devolution of power and their determination to rid us of the welfare state and its works. Though none of these pols would likely trash middle-class entitlements, still it is striking how each dumped on the federal government in order to create or refurbish a populist image. In this era of aborning populism any politician seeking to position himself on the right must sound far more "pathological" than Adorno's "pseudo-democrats" interviewed for the *Authoritarian Personality*.

Though the system continues to expand, it exercises force without real moral authority. The political analyst Kevin Phillips describes "popular hatred of Washington" as a national fixation, and the dread of the feds expressed by the militiamen is shared by at least half of the American people, according to recent polls.

It is also laughable that former civil rights and Vietnam War protesters have become staunch defenders of police violence and surveillance operations once these have been turned against the Right. But this about-face does not seem to be working.

By now the cumulative effect of years of attack on irresponsible federal power, begun on the liberal Left, is rebounding to the Right's benefit. Superliberal Republican presidential candidate Arlen Specter is now championing the cause of white separatist Randy Weaver. The killing of Weaver's family by the FBI, on appallingly insufficient grounds, is widely seen as one further proof of federal power run riot.

Despite his otherwise predictably liberal stands, Specter too is making a bid to woo the populist Right. And the one Republican candidate entirely financed by the neoconservatives, Allan Keyes, has run away from glorifying the democratic capitalist welfare state. In speeches this summer Keyes kept coming back to the urgent need to discipline wayward administrators. One could hear Keyes impersonating Pat Buchanan not only on the abortion issue but in demanding that judges and administrators be brought under popular control.

But for the time being only a fraction of the emerging populist Right is aware of its intellectual vanguard; and in the atmosphere of disinformation created by the media, some rightwing populists still believe that Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh are fitting spokesmen for their cause. These misconceptions are correctable, and today's respectable conservatives will eventually follow Bennett and Kemp into the dustbin of liberal irrelevancy. ■

The managerial-therapeutic state is slowly unraveling.

Professor Gottfried's great book, The Conservative Movement, *is available from the* RRR *for $18 postpaid. Phone 1-800-325-7257.*

Sweet Land of Liberty

by Murray N. Rothbard

What exactly is the relationship between the principles of liberty, the "abstract" principles if you will, and the undeniable fact that they were instantiated most fully and gloriously in the Old Republic, in the United States of America, in the old patriotic hymn the "sweet land of liberty," at least until recent decades?

Part of the answer was supplied in the excellent little book by the French economic historian Jean Bacchler, *The Origins of Capitalism*. Bacchler locates the origins of the highly and uniquely developed market economy in Western Europe in two interrelated facts from early centuries of the Christian era: first, the policies were so remarkably decentralized that there were literally hundreds of small sovereign states or quasi-states instead of one mighty empire; and second, for the first time in world history, there was no state-run Church; in other words, the Christian Church was transnational and therefore could and did function as a mighty check upon state power.

As a result of these lucky or providential circumstances, an international market could develop, and private individuals and groups could flourish more or less free of state power and depredations. I would add another important point: that Christianity is the only religion that I know of that is individualist rather than collectivist, whose focus is not the tribe or the city-state or some universal pantheistic blob, but the person and his salvation, not only a person made in God's image, but in one of whom God Himself had become incarnate.

So the first reason America became the sweet land of liberty is that its heritage was Western European, the creation of those current villains, dead white European males. But what led America to surpass the liberties of the Old World?

But what made America into a nation? And what is a "nation,"

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anyway? It seems clear to me that a country or a nation can be held together either by a dynastic empire, such as the Habsburgs; by ethnic ties, such as we are seeing in the new nations of Europe and western Asia; by some overarching idea or ideology, such as communism (although the Soviet Union was also in many ways a cover for imperial domination by Russia over other nationalities); or by some unique blend of the last two, which I hope to show was the case in the United States.

We start by harking back to what is supposed to be an old discredited myth: that North America, despite the Indians, was basically an empty continent. Compared with densely populated Western Europe, North America was a rich and empty land, full of great resources, ready to be settled. Being relatively empty, the land was peopled by various groups of settlers, each of whom could do in the New World what they could never do in the Old: set up their own cherished institutions without rubbing up against each other.

It is a cliche that America is uniquely a nation of immigrants, and from this supposed fact, the intellectual and media elites, from left-liberal to left-libertarian to neoconservative, go on to celebrate the multicultural melting pot or mosaic of America. Moreover, these same elites are using this alleged tradition to stimulate an ingathering of one and all, thereby turning America into what Ben Wattenberg calls the "first universal nation."

What led America to surpass the liberties of the Old World?

There are several grave problems with this disastrous oxymoron. The whole point of a nation is that it cannot be "universal." To have a country or a nation at all, there must be close ties of shared customs and traditions, values, principles, and institutions. These ties cannot be imposed externally and suddenly by fiat, or by a handful of bureaucrats or ideologues. They must grow, "organically" as it were, over the centuries, from within or from below among the people.

In almost all cases, the foundation of these ties is a shared ethnicity, which inspires and cements the common customs, principles, and institutions. That is why the collapse by the end of World War I of multinational dynasties such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the recent glorious crumbling of the imperial, ideological, multinational Soviet Union, have allowed ethnic nations, or nation-states, to come powerfully to the fore.

If there are no shared ethnic and cultural bonds within a country, then the "country" cannot be a nation at all: it can only be a congeries of clashing peoples and groups, held together by the coercive force of the state apparatus, which grows and swells in its attempt to try to hold the collapsing entity together.

The state apparatus, of course, does not mind this process at all, since under the cover of a grotesquely warped form of "patriotism," it can maximize its own power at the expense of persons, families, communities, and local governments, which may be the point of the whole exercise.

Let us look more closely at the slogan that "we are a nation of immigrants." It may be true enough, but it misses the point: every nation on the face of the earth, after all, was originally settled by immigrants. The difference is that these other nations of immigrants were by and large ethnically homogeneous, and each of them—Welsh, Serbs, or Uzbeks—has more or less settled into its own territory, if not always its own nation-state.

Of course, there were many admixtures, many places where, for various reasons, no one ethnic group was preponderant. But America needs to realize that it is precisely those areas—whether Bosnia, or Afghanistan, or Northern Ireland—where bloody conflict seems to be unrelenting and eternal. The idea of the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups within a country is a chimera, an absurd and impossible dream that turns rapidly into a nightmare. National and ethnic separation, each group with its own nation or country, seems to be the only workable solution.

And here we need to point out that a shared religion is, in virtually every case, a necessary part of ethnicity. This truth offends modern liberal ideologues, left and right, who like to think of religion as uniquely personal to each individual. In fact, a religion is always a community, a community of specific creeds, liturgies, and buildings. It is a community of ideas and practices that parents pass on to their children.

But does this not contradict one of my first points: that a crucial reason for the freedom, the economic prosperity, and the glorious civilization of Western Europe was that the state did not dominate and cripple the Church, that the Christian Church, at least before the Reformation, was transnational?

Not at all, for the same Christian or Catholic Church, even when all services were in Latin, took a different cultural form in each country. There was no mistaking the differences, for example, between Italian and Irish

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Catholicism. Furthermore, because the Church was transnational, it could not be dominated by the state, whose power over civil society was kept within strict limits.

How did America forge a new nation out of these diverse groups of immigrants? The answer is worked out in *Albion's Seed*, in which David Hackett Fischer demonstrates that the founding immigrant groups in America, virtually all the immigrants in the first two of the four centuries of American life, came from the British Isles.

It is true that these immigrant groups came from different regions of Britain, and that they settled homogeneously in different regions. Essentially, there were three groups: Puritans, who came mainly from East Anglia and settled in close-knit townships in New England; Cavaliers, who came from Wessex in southern England, and settled on large plantations in the tidewater South; and, in the 18th century, large numbers of Scotch-Irish, who came from the fierce and warring border country in northern England, southern Scotland, and northern Ireland, who settled as individualistic farmers in the back country of Southern and Middle Atlantic America.

Each of these groups had very different values, mores, institutions, and temperaments, and they often clashed when brought together. They were all British and almost all Protestants, although even their Protestantism varied markedly, but they were still all British, and all were Christians. Hence, despite their numerous differences, they were able to forge a new nation in opposition to the British attempt to reimpose an empire upon the colonies, which had been allowed, for various reasons, to acquire de facto independence.

National and ethnic separation, each group with its own nation or country, seems to be the only workable solution.

The Americans could form a new nation because the conditions for a single nation existed: a common language, a common ethnicity, a common British heritage, and even a common religion. The inherited British principles were essentially libertarian, stressing limited government, parliamentary institutions, local liberties, freedom of speech and assembly, free markets, and the rights of private property.

What the Founding Fathers did, in casting off the chains binding us to the British Empire, was to use their deep and broad insights into the history of nations, build on such British examples as Magna Carta and the Declaration of Rights, and create a uniquely decentralized polity of separate and sovereign states each delegating strictly limited powers to a federal government.

Each of the state governments, as well as the federal government, had its power chained down by constitutions and bills of rights, insuring that power remained in the hands of the people themselves. Any government power was to be kept on the local level, as close to the people as possible, and the only function of government was to secure the property rights of the governed. Not the least, of course, the rights of the people against the government itself.

What about the famed "separation of church and state," a phrase which never appears in the founding documents? The point of this idea was not the absurd and fanatically secularist notion of insuring at all costs that there be no prayer in the public schools; indeed, only the New England Puritans and Unitarians were interested in having any public schools at all.

What the Founding Fathers realized is that any overarching big government is apt to impose a state church and thereby transcend the vital religious checks and limits on state power—as the Byzantine Empire and later Czarist Russia were able to do. And even though there was no longer a single Christian church as there had been in pre-Reformation Europe, there were many Protestant sects in America, and the Founding Fathers were anxious to ensure that the federal government never established one of them to be the official State Church of America.

Hence, the First Amendment, which of course was supposed to apply only to the federal government, and which wedded religious liberty to the absence of such an established Church. It is instructive to note, by the way, that a few of the states continued to have an

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established Church after the adoption of the Constitution, such as the Congregational Church in Connecticut, without being denounced by the libertarians of that day and without America falling apart.

Until the end of the 18th century, immigration into America was homogeneous, so that free institutions of the country, as well as its stated libertarian principles, were solidly grounded in a shared British tradition of language, customs, values, ideals, and religion.

Then, as Fischer points out, when non-British immigrants began to pour in during the 19th century, largely from Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia, these nationalities could and did adapt themselves to those British customs and institutions, not just to the English language, which was critical, but also to the values, principles, and institutions, as stated in the founding American documents as well as to the unstated but equally important traditions inherited from Britain.

This assimilation process worked astoundingly well. Even when non-British groups poured in from other parts of Europe in large numbers, and even when there was friction and resistance, especially in the shock to Protestants of Catholic immigration, the adaptation process worked with remarkable speed and thoroughness. Even when larger numbers arrived in what was termed the "new immigration" from Eastern and Southern Europe at the close of the 19th century, the process continued to work well.

I remember our family physician telling me about his first trip to London, about how much it meant to him to see the Houses of Parliament, what he referred to as "our heritage." Even though his personal ancestry was far from Britain and his parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe, he said this in absolute sincerity and without a trace of irony. As for my own immigrant father and myself, he and we had become "Americans" in our heart and soul, and of course Britain and its traditions and institutions were the foundation of America's and therefore of "our" heritage.

We used to talk about what it meant to be "an American." We used to say these words proudly, and they had a deep meaning. But the very concept of being "an American" has been lost. What does "American" mean nowadays, except to be born on American territory, to be entitled to welfare benefits, or to be subject to American taxes?

When my father came to this country in 1910, he knew not a word of English and had no money. All he had was the burning determination to "become an American." What that meant for him was not unusual at the time, although he perhaps pursued the goal with more consistency than many of his fellows.

He was determined, in the first place, not only to learn English, but to abandon his Old World culture and read only this new language. He was in that way able to purge himself of any foreign accent. Although he arrived penniless, he worked his way through a private college, paying tuition with never a thought about seeking government handouts. That idea was anathema to all of this generation. He then became a chemist and a successful corporate executive. Never did he succumb to modern victimology; he would have considered such whining as reprehensible, evil, indeed "un-American."

Being "an American," then, meant to my father, and to most other Americans of his and earlier generations, being committed to certain core principles: respect for private property, hard work, thrift, freedom of enterprise, and a government that was strictly limited, confined basically to keeping criminals in line. These ideas of Americanism were not, of course, worked out systematically or in the trappings of high political theory, either by my father or by most Americans. They were ingrained, core, fundamental beliefs, beliefs deep in their bones.

This lack of a systematic theoretical conception of Americanism was both a strength and a weakness. It was a strength precisely because it was habitual, instinctive, deeply rooted. But it was a weakness because it left the American public open to attack in recent times by cunning and sophisticated intellectuals who, "subversive" in the deepest and truest sense, are able to challenge and to undermine this structure of beliefs and practices that had wrought our beloved America.

For this marvelous "Americanism," these ideas and customs and their instantiated institutions and practices, brought about the Old Republic, the sweet land of liberty that we knew and loved, the freest, the most prosperous, the most glorious nation on earth, the nation whose passing we mourn today.

When we sang the old patriotic hymns, we meant every word, even when, as in the case of my family physician, this fervor might seem misplaced to a cynic. Yes, even when we sang

Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrim's pride.

"Freedom's holy light" may be dimming, along with what it means to be "an American," but so long as we can recover and celebrate the memory of America's glory and how it came into being, we can live in hope that some day it will shine brightly once again.■

Adapted from the late Murray N. Rothbard's acceptance speech for the Ingersoll Foundation's 1994 Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters.

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